

critical digest

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NEWSLETTER SERVICES

Oct 19, 1953 Vol VI No 7 \$10 year \$25 3 years NYC Weekly Theatre Newsletter LY 9-2826

New York Theatre Diary

Late Arrival-Blackfriars Guild 10/19/53. A New dramatic comedy by Charles Oxton opens Blackfriars Guild season. Staged by Charlott Knight, cast includes Shelia Fallon John J Williams, Marion Fay and Tom Gorman...Frogs of Spring-Broadhurst 10/20/53. Lyn Austin & Thomas Noyes present a new comedy by Nathaniel Benchley. A dramatization of his New Yorker "Side Street" stories. Comedy concerning the families of two adjourning brownstones in NY's East 80's includes Anthony Ross, Hiram Sherman, Haila Stoddard and Barbara Baxley...The Ladies of the Corridor-Longacre 10/21/53. Walter Fried presents a drama by Dorothy Parker & Arnaud d'Usseau about life of widows and divorcees in a NY hotel. Cast includes Edna Best, Betty Field, Walter Matthau, Frances Starr, Shepperd Strudwick, June Walker. Staged by Harold Clurman.

Current Theatre Reviews

The Teahouse of the August Moon- Beck 10/15/53. 100% unanimous raves filed by NY daily drama critics for John Patrick's adaption of Vern Sneider's novel. Delightful, captivating, lovely were the terms applied to all elements of Maurice Evans and George Schaefer's production. The minor flaws of a weak second act and slightly cartoon style officers were admitted and overlooked. Light, sagacious comedy with a droll point of view, rates Atkinson, Times. While Kerr, Herald Tribune, thought Patrick had improved on the original novel. Chapman, News, doubts if there can be any more enjoyable theatre than this comedy. David Wayne, John Forsythe, Paul Ford and Mariko Niki shared praises with set designer Peter Larkin and director Robert Lewis. Several noted that Forsythe looks and sounds like Henry Fonda.

Betty Hutton Show- Palace 10/14/53. 6 raves, 2 mild pros were won by the new vaudeville show playing 9 times weekly to reserved seats. Supporting acts on first half of the bill were all praised with new comic Dick Shawn winning the top notices. Though Atkinson, Times, and Kerr, Herald Tribune, were a little upset by Miss Hutton's special material they joined the majority in welcoming her back at her second Palace appearance. McHarry, News, suggested that the star also appear in the early part of the program with the other acts. Coleman, Mirror, tabbed her as a diminutive storage battery packed with the enormous energy of Boulder Dam. Microphone for blonde star is really not needed, points out McClain, Journal American, and Watts, Post. Sole "con" note filed by Sheaffer, Eagle, found the proceedings too noisy to be listed as entertainment.

Late Love- National 10/13/53. Sole pro vote, and a very mild one at that, came from Kerr, Herald Tribune, who billed Rosemary Casey's new comedy as a lazy Sunday afternoon of a play--amiable, easygoing which a couple of cat-naps will get you through. The players, including Lucile Watson, Arlene Francis, Neil Hamilton and Frank Albertson, he found suitably radiant. But Atkinson, Times, found only Watson acting with distinction, the rest of the players and play was too cute. Chapman, News, offered a free quote when he called show the most antiseptic comedy seen since Daddy Long-Legs in 1915. Other critics noted several amusing scenes, but not enough for a full evening. Several noted that the first night audience enjoyed itself.

 ' Village Theatre '

Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy will co-star in Madam Will You Walk, the first of five plays presented at the Phoenix by Morris Houghton and T. Edward Hamblen. The Sidney Howard play was written in 1938 and produced after the author's death by the Playwrights with George M Cohan in the lead. Show was withdrawn after Baltimore tryout. Phoenix price scale will be from \$1.20 to \$3.

The Death of Odysseus will be presented at Amato Theatre Nov 3,4,5 by Artists Theatre...Variety survey of "voluntary admission" policies of Village Theatres reports averages of \$1 at Originals Only, 50¢ at Amato Theatre, and \$1 at Greenwich Mews.

 ' Off Broadway '

Climate of Eden production at Current Stages recommended by "LDK", Women's Wear. Eva Stern's portrayal was tabbed as the most promising introduction of a new actress since Geraldine Page. Tiny 50 seat theatre at 1129 Sixth Ave urges reservations by made by mail or phone.

 ' Yiddish Theatre '

Second Marriage, Louis Freiman's adaptation of his own radio serial, presented at the Second Avenue Theatre by player-producers Edmund Zayenda and Irving Jacobson, won a set of mild pro reviews. "R.K", Times, Strassberg, Mirror, Watts, Post, Dash, Women's Wear, Sheaffer, Eagle, and Holl, Variety, all granted that the soap opera flavor was very evident; but they still found it entertaining.

 ' Theatre Record Comment '

Theatre Masterwork production of Importance of Being Earnest with Maurice Evans and Lucille Watson billed as an hilarious performance by Lewis, Cue. Caedmon Records disc of Sean O'Casey reading from Juno and the Paycock was rated a beauty by Lewis.

 ' Theatre Books '

"Ben Jonson of Westminster" by Marc-hette Chute (Dutton \$5) enjoyed by Krutch, Saturday Review and Coleman, Mirror, as a fascinating account of biography and history.

"George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Survey" edited by Louis Kronenberger (World \$6) okayed by Irvine, Saturday Review, and Down, Variety. Each critic had his favorite pieces among the 21 essays by diverse drama reviewers.

 ' Childrens Theatre '

Children's Own Theatre, a group of child actors age 7 to 12, opened its third season at the Metropolitan Duane, 201 W 13 with a production of Rumpelstilken, plus a puppet and magic show. Programs are repeated Saturdays at 3PM, and change monthly. Last season the group played at Club Cinema.

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 ' Green Room Department '

REVIEWERS ROLE...The daily newspaper drama critic cannot exert a constructive influence upon playwrights until he has developed some intelligent critical standards which he is willing to defend, and until he is capable of writing with sufficient explicitness to make his basis of judgment clear to a thoughtful reader, comments Lenyth Brockett, Educational Theatre Journal. In order to do this the Stetson University, Florida, professor explains, the daily critic must abandon his pose of being merely a reporter of his own sensations and his useless attempt to approximate the average level of public taste.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Dissatisfaction has been expressed by both the trade and theatre fans at the choice of plays Jose Ferrer has picked for the NYC Center Theatre Company, reports Variety. Many feel that new productions, not revivals, should be produced...Tea and Sympathy will run until summer, predicts Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun...Theatre managers should provide actors with comfortable chairs backstage where they can relax between matinee and evening performances, suggests "Stage".

DIAPERED DRAMATIST...Though all of the sympathy goes to the fate of the new playwright, Burr, Playbill, argues that those in the know insist that the playwright is often less to be pitied than the producer who agrees to read or even produce his new play. With the sanction of the Dramatist Guild contract the author is guaranteed every right except the right to toss the producer into jail if he fails to come up with a hit.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...TV has replaced little theatres and strawhats as the school and gadfly for commercial theatre, Fred Coe, producer of Trip to Bountiful and NBC TV producer told Coleman, Mirror. In the theatre there is no second chance. But a TV producer can afford an experiment or a novelty now and then...From now on Dorothy Parker will claim NYC as her home, she told Morehouse, WT&S. The co-author of Ladies in the Corridor, her first play since 1924's Close Harmony, labeled Philadelphia as an ugly place where the cobblestones hurt your feet.

 ' Broadway TV Theatre '

Front Page. Charles MacArthur-Ben Hecht satire on newspaper men, will be presented Oct 19-23 on WOR TV Broadway TV Theatre with Lew Parker and E.E. Horton. The original production, which opened the 1928 season on August 14 at the Times Square Theatre (214 W 42) ran for 276 performances. Lee Tracy and Osgood Perkins were featured in the Jed Harris production staged by

George S. Kauffman. Dorothy Stickney played Molly Molloy. Critics rated it 100% though several, including Hammond, Herald Tribune, thought there was too much swearing onstage. In 1946 Hunt Stromberg and Thomas Splender produced a revival which ran 79 performances at the Royale. Charles MacArthur directed and cast included Lew Parker and Arnold Moss.

 ' Pros & Cons by TMK '

Mary Martin-Ethel Merman Ford Anniversary Show (Decca) is a rare theatre treat which presents two of the theatre's favorite gals at their peak. The off-the-air disc is a gem in spite of the unneeded audience applause.

The success of the Take A Giant Step display ads explaining the new shows might be heart-warming to every theatre fan ever trapped into seeing a play by phony quote ads. More reason why ads instead of quote ads will sell more seats.

The 1953-54 Broadway season is now moving into high gear. Though the season started earlier than usual, only one and two productions have been opening weekly. But now the pace has moved up to three and four per week.

What might have been the first two-a-night-opening in years was averted when Bill Doll switched the opening date of Sherlock Holmes to Friday, October 30 from Tuesday, November 3. Starring Basil Rathbone in a script written by his wife, Ouida, the first Broadway production of the popular press agent is now playing in Boston. This change in dates leaves The Trip to Bountiful, the Fred Coe-Theatre Guild production of Horton Foote's TV script, free to open on November 3.

Drama Desk Meeting

"What Can be Done to Improve Broadway" is the topic to be discussed at the second meeting of "Drama Desk" on Oct 19 by 3 NYC Mayoralty candidates. Harold Riegelman, Robert Wagner, Jr and Rudolph Halley will be questioned by the NY theatre editors & reporters on such topics as building, tickets, traffic, etc. Hermoine Gingold, making her US debut in John Murray Anderson's "Almanac" also will be a guest.

Plays

Porgy and Bess now playing 2 performances on Sundays...200 fans on semi-annual Columbus Citizen "Show Train" now playgoing in NYC...At Home With Ethel Waters folded after 23 performances...Advance sales at Take A Giant Step have picked up. Producers thanked public in Times' display ad...My 3 Angels will start national tour the first week in December...Guys and Dolls closes Nov 28 and starts tour in Baltimore.

People

Judith Anderson signed for Playwrights' In the Summer House...Actors Equity suspended Dick Haymes for six weeks for not furnishing proper information on his application blank...NY legit theatres will pay musicians higher minimums and will hire more per house under new contract.

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

Ethel Merman will appear for 2 performances on NBC TV Comedy Hour...Martha Wright will be on ABC TV Tuesday and Thursdays at 7 15 PM EST...Blossom Seeley and Benny Fields on twice daily as disc jockeys on WMCA, NY...Atkinson, Kerr and Watts voiced comments on Teahouse of August Moon on CBS Radio "Stage-struck."

Theatre Obits

Millard Mitchell, age 50, of lung cancer...Nigel Bruce, age 58, of heart attack...Porter Hall, age 65, of heart attack.

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